



HQ AETC News Clips

Randolph AFB TX



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All AF bases face rape inquiries

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Sig Christenson
Express-News Military Writer

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The Air Force, stung by a flurry of reported sexual assaults of airmen at Sheppard AFB in North Texas, said Friday it would scrutinize all of its installations to learn if there are similar problems elsewhere.

It wasn't clear how each of the service's major commands would conduct those investigations, said Lt. Col. Will Nichols, a spokesman for Air Force Secretary James Roche. But he said the issue of sexual assaults had been a major topic of meetings among Air Force leaders.

"They will aggressively determine whether a problem exists at each base and if so, determine the magnitude of it," Nichols said.

One in five of the 700,000 military and civilian employees in the Air Force, Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve are female.

As the servicewide investigation was announced late in the day, the Air Education and Training Command at Randolph AFB revealed it would expand its probe of Sheppard, and that it had established a toll-free sexual assault hot line for airmen who have served at the 13 AETC bases across the country since the command's inception in 1993.

Five of those are in Texas, including two in San Antonio: Lackland and Randolph. The others are Laughlin in Del Rio, Goodfellow in San Angelo and Sheppard.

The actions came after discussions between AETC commander, Gen. Donald G. Cook, and his staff.

"His position on this is very firm. We have no tolerance for this kind of behavior and we will do everything we can to deter it," AETC's top spokesman, Col. Bob Potter, said late Friday.

"And where our best efforts fail, we will provide swift and compassionate aid to victims, and we will swiftly and thoroughly investigate the circumstances to determine the appropriate follow-on action," he added. "And when we determine that action should be taken we will prosecute perpetrators."

Cook ordered the probe after the Denver Post reported two dozen women at Sheppard claimed to have been sexually assaulted by fellow airmen during the past year at weekend off-base parties.

The newspaper said most of the victims contacted First Step Inc., a Wichita Falls rape crisis center, because they feared retaliation by telling commanders at the base.

Sheppard conditionally passed a preliminary inspection when a 22-member AETC team this week said it found the base to be safe, and that "robust programs exist to deter sexual assaults."

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The team last week interviewed 1,000 Sheppard commanders, instructors and students at the training base, and surveyed another 5,000. It also met with staff at First Step, which reported the incidents.

But that wasn't enough for Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, R-Texas. Concerned over a series of reported instances of sexual misconduct at military installations in the United States, Iraq, Kuwait and Afghanistan, she asked that the Air Force contact women who had served at Sheppard over the past five years.

Roche agreed to that request Friday.

The probe of Sheppard, AETC's largest training base with 9,900 airmen — two-thirds of them students — found it was secure, but needed to bolster sexual assault awareness training.

Nine of 10 airmen surveyed said they believed the base's leaders effectively handle sexual assault allegations once they are reported. But the AETC team also found that students worried they'd be disciplined for misconduct, embarrassed or forced to delay their training if they reported a sexual assault.

A regional hot line that had been established at the base during the team's visit to field complaints has been disconnected, AETC spokesman Dave Smith said, but a national toll-free hot line set up last week for the same purpose continues to accept calls around the clock.

Hutchison, who earlier this week said the team's findings were "far from complete" and "actually raised more questions," said Friday that she was pleased with Roche's decision.

"Service men and women alike should know with absolute certainty that the military will expeditiously and thoroughly examine every assault allegation and that offenders will be brought to justice after due process," she said.



AETC Bases News Clips

Sheppard AFB, TX



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Panel: Base safe but can improve

By Lee B. Weaver/Times Record News
February 27, 2004

Sheppard Air Force Base got passing marks from an Air Force special review team looking into sexual assault deterrence and victim support programs at the base, according to a preliminary report released Thursday.

But there's room for improvement, Air Force officials said.

The findings followed a review by a 22-member investigative team last week, which interviewed more than 1,000 base personnel and canvassed another 5,000 Sheppard students.

The team was commissioned by Gen. Donald G. Cook, Commander of Air Education and Training Command, after allegations earlier this month in the Denver Post that widespread sexual assaults on female Sheppard personnel had gone "largely unnoticed."

In a statement, Gen. Cook said the Air Force's mission regarding its base personnel is "to give them a safe and secure working, living and training environment."

"But if, despite our best efforts, deterrence fails, our top priority is to provide swift and compassionate aid to the victims, thoroughly investigate the circumstances surrounding assaults, and prosecute perpetrators," Cook said.

The preliminary report described the environment at Sheppard as "safe," and called the existing prevention and investigative programs "robust."

But the team also saw opportunities to improve the climate and practices.

"... student training should be expanded to include more emphasis on sexual assault awareness, deterrence and reporting," the report said. "Likewise, the current training programs for commanders, first sergeants, Military Training Leaders and instructors should be expanded to include additional training on sexual assault awareness, deterrence and reporting."

The report included the following findings:

--90 percent of students think officials effectively handle sexual assault allegations when reported.

--95 percent of female students said they felt safe on base.

--The 45 sexual assault cases from 1993 to 2003 that resulted in completed courts-martial or Article 15s were "handled appropriately and expeditiously."

--An additional 69 cases were investigated since 1996 that did not result in courts-martial or Article 15s.

--There are 10 allegations currently under investigation at the base.

The report said the primary reasons students gave for not reporting sexual assaults were:

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- Concerns that their training would be delayed by an investigation;
- Disciplinary action for their own misconduct at the time of the sexual assault;
- Embarrassment, loss of confidentiality and peer pressure.

U.S. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, R-Texas, commended the Air Force for taking "many reassuring steps." But, the senator had misgivings of her own.

"The findings released today are far from complete. In fact, they raise additional questions," Hutchison said in a statement.

"I'm concerned that there are 10 reported cases of abuse currently under investigation, and many more that have produced inconclusive results. It also appears that some 10 percent of students ... apparently lack confidence in base leadership's handling of sexual assault allegations ... And I'm concerned when survey results indicate that a number of women continue to believe the base is not a safe place."

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AETC Bases News Clips

Altus AFB, OK



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Altus AFB west runway reopens

By Jaime Willis, Staff Intern

The west runway at Altus AFB re-opened Thursday afternoon with a ribbon-cutting ceremony and the launching of KC-135, C-5 and C-17 aircraft after being closed for one year.

While the runway was being repaired, traffic was reduced 30 percent, so airports such as the Clinton-Sherman Industrial Parkway and Amarillo and Lubbock International Airports were utilized for training purposes.

"Incidentally, although the inside runway was not used in 2003, the control tower recorded 63,365 operations," Col. Mark Solo said. "During that period, we graduated about 3,000 students and flew 25,000 flying hours worth \$84 million."

According to Solo, operations on the 50-year-old west runway ceased in Feb. 2003, enabling the reconstruction of shoulders and load-bearing asphalt sections.

"Through the years, our runways have taken a lot of pounding, primarily to train the nation's best, most talented aircrews," Solo said. "In 2002 alone, the control tower recorded 78, 656 takeoffs, landings and low approaches."

In 1955, the runway was extended from 10,800 feet to 13,440 feet and widened from 200 feet to 300 feet to accommodate heavy aircraft such as the B-52.

"We also decided to narrow the runway from 300 feet to 200 feet since our primary aircraft, the C-17, utilizes the narrower runway," Solo said.

During reconstruction, 400,000 tons of surface asphalt were removed and replaced, and a majority of material was reused in various projects. Some of the it will fill several demolition projects, and the city of Altus and Jackson County will use the material in road and street projects.

Replacement materials came from local quarries; however, the new asphalt was formed on base in batch plants that were provided for the project.

Solo noted that the runway reconstruction cost an approximated \$20 million, provided by appropriated funds. An additional \$2.2 million was used for the hazardous cargo pad taxiway and \$1.5 million for the turn-in lanes for C-5 aircraft runway access.

The reconstruction, Solo believes, will allow the base to train more efficiently and effectively.

"We fly 35 to 40 minutes to get to other training bases, whereas now we don't have to go that distance," Solo said. "We can do the vast majority of our training here."

The east runway, Solo added, is now in need of repairs even though it has been in service for less than 10 years; reconstruction, however, will not begin for at least five years.

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Air Force survey differs from news story

Majority believe Sheppard safe, confident in leaders, process

By Tara CoppScripps Howard News Service
February 26, 2004

WASHINGTON - An Air Force survey on sexual assaults on women stationed at Sheppard Air Force base paints a different picture than that reported in a Denver newspaper.

The disclosure came Wednesday during a Senate hearing on sexual assaults in the military.

Gen. Michael Moseley, vice chief of staff for the Air Force said initial data from the survey conducted by a special team last week revealed:

(85 percent believe they are encouraged to report sex crimes to leadership;

(90 percent are confident in leadership at Sheppard to handle sexual assault issues;

(95 percent of females feel safe on base;

(92 percent of females are confident in leadership at Sheppard.

The 22-member team surveyed 5,035 Sheppard students and conducted face-to-face interviews with 1,000 randomly selected students. The team reported that in the last 10 years, there have been 45 cases of reported sexual assaults; 19 of those ended in a court-martial hearing with 15 guilty verdicts, and 26 others ended in an Article 15, which is non-judicial punishment.

A hot line was also set up on base, and received five phone calls, Moseley said.

The first respondent called in to say her case had been handled well; the second reported an attack at a base other than Sheppard; the third asked for help and that matter is under investigation; and the fourth and fifth reported attacks from 1966 and 1974, without providing follow-up information, Moseley said.

Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, asked specifically for an update on the Air Force's investigation into attacks at Sheppard and wanted more.

"I have to wonder how many studies and how many task forces we need to solve this unacceptable problem," Cornyn said. "I remain concerned that we have not yet successfully implemented all the lessons learned from previous incidents of sexual assault, and the Department of Defense must do a better job of providing a uniform and standardized effort."

The Denver Post reported earlier this month that sexual assaults at Sheppard were widespread and many victims were afraid to report them.

Another study, a 2002 Pentagon survey, showed overall one in four women in the military reported being sexually harassed by fellow troops.

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The hearing pitted two rows of the Pentagon's top officers across from a sternly determined panel of Senate Armed Services Committee members. The hearing was called in response to a spike of reported sexual attacks on female soldiers in combat zones and at their training bases at home.

"If you don't carry it (actual reforms to better protect female soldiers) out," Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Sen. John Warner, R-Va., said. "We're going to take over."

Colorado Republican Sen. Wayne Allard said based on his exposure to the Air Force Academy's investigation last year, it's clear that the current systems still don't do enough.

"We have a serious problem that will not go away with time," Allard said.

In the last year, 86 sexual attacks on female soldiers were reported on bases in Kuwait or in far-off postings in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The victim sometimes had to remain posted with her alleged attacker - often a fellow soldier and sometimes her commanding officer.

Reports of attacks spurred the Department of Defense to send a task force to the region to look into the medical and support facilities women troops have in case of assault.

The Air Force Academy is still dealing with the repercussions of dozens of female cadets testifying last year they were discouraged from seeking help and often retaliated against after a rape at the Colorado campus.

At Wednesday's hearing, the Navy reported another dozen alleged attacks are being investigated at its Bahrain port.

Wednesday's hearing meant to provide insight into the policies and programs the services already have in place to prevent sexual assaults, while preparing for the findings of the task force.

Allard also said there would be several future panels, including one to hear testimony from past sexual assault victims, to get how they were treated after an attack on the official record.

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AETC Bases News Clips

LUKE AFB, AZ



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Bill slowed to bar storage of natural gas near Luke

By David Madrid
The Arizona Republic

Legislative efforts to stop a mammoth natural-gas storage facility from being built near Luke Air Force Base have screeched to a halt after an East Valley committee chairman refused to hear the bill.

Supporters are willing to amend House Bill 2134 so that it is specific only to Luke. The refusal of Rep. Chuck Gray, a Mesa Republican, to hear the bill has angered West Valley leaders, who say they will not compromise if it means the El Paso Natural Gas Co. facility will be built near Luke.

They are concerned about safety and they fear the proximity of the facility to the base could hurt when a quarter of the nation's military bases are chosen for closure in 2005.

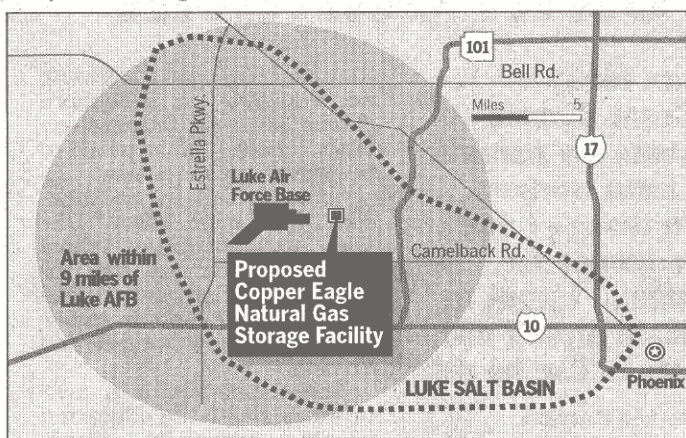
The Copper Eagle Natural Gas Storage Facility would store 9.6 billion cubic feet of natural gas in three large salt caverns east of the base and would likely have a 35-mile-long, 36-inch pipeline running from the facility to the north and the west of the base and crossing its southern departure corridor, where live-armed flights take off.

Rep. John Nelson, R-Glendale, the prime sponsor of the bill, said that Gray is concerned with the gas company's property rights. Gray could not be reached for comment Thursday.

"A committee chair should represent more than just a small parochial view of the

Proposed gas-storage site

A bill that would prevent the building of a natural-gas storage facility within a nine-mile radius of Luke Air Force Base has stalled in a legislative committee. The Luke Salt Basin extends beyond that radius, but El Paso Natural Gas Co. insists that is the only location where it can put the storage site.



Source: Salt River Project

Dan Kempton/The Arizona Republic

state, and that's what's happening," Nelson said.

County Supervisor Max Wilson said unlimited property rights don't come with purchased land. Zoning must be granted, he said.

"This is just about money and nothing else," Wilson added.

Glendale Mayor Elaine Scruggs said the issue is about preserving human life.

That is also one concern of Luke's commander, Brig. Gen. Philip Breedlove.

After meetings with the gas company in early February, Breedlove sent it a letter stating that anything that adversely affects the safety and secu-

rity of the base's airmen, their families or the base's mission concerns him greatly.

The facility would sit within a mile of Luke, its base housing, hospital and a school.

Martin Shultz, a lobbyist for Pinnacle West Capital Corp. and APS, opposes the bill. He said everyone should focus on reaching a solution because the spot near Luke is the best location for the facility.

"We wouldn't support solutions that compromise Luke," Shultz said. "We're some of its biggest supporters. ..."

Reach the reporter at
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or (602) 444-6926.

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LUKE AFB, AZ



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Military maneuver

Our stand: Luke boss fires a warning shot on natural-gas storage

A terse and virtually unprecedented letter from the commander of Luke Air Force Base to an El Paso Gas Co. executive ought to be required reading for all state lawmakers.

It should be especially pertinent to House Speaker Jake Flake and his new chairman of the Natural Resources and Agriculture Committee, Rep. Chuck Gray of Mesa.

That's because this morning Speaker Flake will convene a private meeting of stakeholders on a bill that Gray refuses to hear in committee. The legislation would prohibit the use of a huge salt cavern in the West Valley for storage of natural gas.

Brig. Gen. Philip Breedlove, in his letter, expresses concern about "the safety and security" of Air Force personnel and the base's ability to conduct its mission, which is training F-16 pilots, were a natural-gas facility to move in next door.

Breedlove's letter, written after meeting with El Paso representatives, pointedly says "there can be no guarantee" that the proposed pipeline and storage facility "will not now nor at some point in the future, adversely impact" the base and its mission.

For the military to get involved in this manner is unusual. It underscores the strong concern over El Paso's proposed facility. It should be a wake-up call to state lawmakers that Luke, and its \$1.4 billion annual economic impact, could be jeopardized.

Breedlove's letter is the latest entry into the file to establish a record against the project. All West Valley cities and the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors have passed resolutions in opposition.



Brig. Gen. Philip Breedlove

This represents a united front against El Paso's plans to store 9.6 billion cubic feet of natural gas underground in an area that's smack in the path of development in the West Valley.

This resistance should not only give El Paso second thoughts about pursuing the project but also should register on the radar screen of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission which, in matters

such as these, has the final say, with or without a state law prohibiting the facility.

The bill, sponsored by Rep. John Nelson, R-Glendale, would prohibit the storage of natural gas in salt caverns within nine miles of an Air Force base that trains fighter pilots.

He's determined to push the envelope, perhaps getting signatures to discharge the bill or offer it as an amendment on the House floor to another bill, if Flake and Gray are not persuaded.

Nelson is on the right course.

Safety is the major concern. So, too, is Luke's future because 25 percent of all military bases will be closed or consolidated next year. It's not a stretch to think that putting natural gas in a cavern under Luke could be a stake through the heart of the base.

One possible sign of hope: Marty Shultz, a Pinnacle West vice president, says the utility is not willing to jeopardize Luke over its support for El Paso's Copper Eagle project.

Natural gas is essential to the Valley's growth. But El Paso isn't the only firm looking to expand operations. Several others are exploring new pipelines.

El Paso's project is in the wrong location. The company should look elsewhere for salt caverns, far from populated areas and military installations.

The Arizona Republic

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Columbus AFB MS



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Posted on Thu, Feb. 26, 2004

Dozens report rapes in war zone

Army, by far, has most incidents

By ERIC SCHMITT

NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE

WASHINGTON - The U.S. military is facing the gravest allegations of sexual misconduct in years, with dozens of servicewomen in the Persian Gulf area and elsewhere saying they were sexually assaulted or raped by fellow troops, lawmakers and victims advocates said on Wednesday. There have been 112 reports of sexual misconduct over roughly the past two years in the Central Command area of operations, which includes Iraq, Kuwait and Afghanistan, military officials said Wednesday. The Army has reported 86 incidents, the Navy 12, the Air Force eight and the Marine Corps six.

Military officials said the bulk of the allegations were being investigated and that some had already resulted in disciplinary actions, but they could not provide specifics. They added that a small number of the reports turned out to be unfounded.

In addition, about two dozen women at Sheppard Air Force Base, a large training facility in Texas, have reported to a local rape-crisis center that they were assaulted in 2002.

The issue came to a boil at a contentious hearing on Capitol Hill on Wednesday, where Senate Democrats and Republicans sharply questioned the Pentagon's top personnel official and four four-star generals for what the lawmakers said were inexplicable lapses in the military's ability to protect servicewomen.

Lawmakers said they were particularly appalled by reports that women serving as military police officers had been assaulted by male colleagues in remote combat zones.

The Sun Herald

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Is lobbyist's loyalty divided?

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Peggy Fikac
Chief, Express-News Austin bureau

AUSTIN — A Washington firm that gets \$15,000 monthly to lobby for Texas on issues that include military bases is being asked whether a conflict is posed by its reported negotiations with Florida to lobby to preserve bases there.

"There is a concern about a potential conflict of interest," said Kathy Walt, spokeswoman for Gov. Rick Perry.

The firm, Piper Rudnick, said in a general statement that it wouldn't take part in activity a client construes as a conflict.

Ed Pérez of Texas' Office of State-Federal Relations said Friday he forwarded a copy of a newspaper report about the contract negotiations to the firm.

The Florida Times-Union of Jacksonville reported that Florida was negotiating with Piper Rudnick to lobby for that state during the military base realignment and closure process.

Pérez said he followed up with a phone call suggesting the firm notify Texas if it sees a potential conflict of interest. Notification of potential conflicts is required in its Texas contract, Pérez said.

The firm has a 23-month contract with Texas that began in October.

Jim Hyland, who advises Piper Rudnick and is Texas' primary contact with the firm, read a statement saying, "It is the firm's policy to disclose all potential conflicts to our clients if and when they arise, and we will not engage in any activity that a client of the firm might construe as a conflict."

Hyland is a former legislative director for Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, R-Texas.

Piper Rudnick is a business law firm with more than 975 lawyers and offices in more than a dozen cities nationwide, including Dallas, according to its web site.

The firm includes Dick Armey, the former U.S. House majority leader from Texas.

The company has an alliance with The Cohen Group, an international consulting firm headed by former U.S. Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen.

If the firm notifies Texas of a potential conflict of interest, Pérez said the state would determine whether a conflict actually exists and discuss it with Piper Rudnick. Pérez said if there is a conflict, the contract could be canceled, "but we're nowhere near that at this point."

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SAFB: Death not related to panel's visit

The death of an avionics instructor at Sheppard Air Force base the same week an Air Force panel conducted allegations of sexual assault was coincidental, a base spokesman said.

"There is no indication it was related whatsoever," said Maj. Manning Brown.

Staff Sgt. Edmund Ehring, 35, was found dead Feb. 17 in a base dormitory. His attorney, Dorie Glickman, has said she believes the death is being investigated as a suicide.

Brown confirms Ehring died of a gunshot wound. He said a ruling on cause of death might come in about 30 days.

Ehring had been charged with the sexual assault of a 12-year-old girl off base.

Glickman said he denied the charge and was free on \$25,000 bond.

Ehring's died one day after the Air Force panel arrived on base to investigate allegations of widespread sexual assaults of women assigned to Sheppard.

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Sheppard AFB, TX



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Meeting encouraging for Cornyn

Senator talks with Air Force officials, discusses Sheppard

By Tara Copp/Scripps Howard News Service
February 27, 2004

WASHINGTON -- Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, said he is "encouraged" after meeting privately Thursday with top Air Force officials about allegations of rape and assaults of women stationed at Sheppard Air Force Base.

Cornyn, a member of a Senate Armed Services subcommittee, met with Air Force Vice Chief Michael Mosely and Gen. Donald Cook, commander of the Air Education and Training Command, which oversees Sheppard.

Cornyn said he was "encouraged by their commitment to punishing any and all offenders, and their strong willingness to ensure the availability of a neutral victim assistance center."

The meeting came during hearings into rapes and assaults on women in the military.

Cornyn asked specifically about the investigation into incidents at Sheppard that were reported in the Denver Post earlier this month.

"No victim should fear retribution for reporting a crime, and no crime should go unpunished for this or any other reason," Cornyn said after the meeting.

Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, R-Texas, said she was also encouraged by the report's initial findings, but it was not enough to determine if they fully understand the depth of the problem.

"I am writing (Air Force) Secretary Roche to urge the Air Force to contact all women that served at Sheppard over the past five years, not just 'non-prior' or new service women. All women serving at Sheppard over the last five years should be encouraged to report any incidents to a newly established telephone hot line," Hutchison said.

Cook said Thursday the use of neutral, off-site, third-party sexual assault assistance programs like First Step Inc. in Wichita Falls could become policy throughout the Air Force.

He said more students would come forward without some of the reporting fears they mentioned to a special team that visited Sheppard last week.

A report issued by that team indicated many Sheppard students would not report a sexual assault.

The students said they wouldn't come forward because they feared their training would not move forward, that they would be disciplined for conduct such as drinking that may have been involved in the incident and because of peer pressure.

The issue of rapes of female service members continues to draw congressional scrutiny because of reports that women are getting attacked by fellow soldiers overseas, and at bases at home.

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In the last few weeks, the Pentagon has reported that at least 86 alleged sexual assaults on females deployed in the Middle East are being investigated by a task force now; the Navy said at the hearing that another dozen attacks at its port in Bahrain have been reported and are under investigation; and about two dozen women at Sheppard have also reported being attacked since 2002.

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